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Synopses of Important Articles.

DAS WORT "BERITH" BEI DEN PROPHETEN UND IN DEN KETUBIM. By PROFESSOR J. J. P. VELETON, JR., in *Stade's Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XIII., 2, 1893, pp. 245-279.

A comparison of the Old Testament passages in which the Hebrew term *be'rith* (covenant) occurs, discloses the following facts respecting its meaning and usage: Before the time of Jeremiah the word is used only rarely in a religious sense. In the Pentateuch it is employed only by the prophetic (J) author; and in the prophetic writings only by Hosea. The peculiar use of the word in its religious application appears first in the thought of the Deuteronomist school. Deuteronomy speaks of a covenant with the fathers, confirming the title to the land of Canaan, a covenant instituted at the time of the Exodus, one at Horeb and another on the plains of Moab. The same and later books speak of a covenant with Levi and the priests. The covenant with David which is to be realized in the future is mentioned (excepting in 2 Sam. 23 : 35) only in Jeremiah, Chronicles and the Psalms.

In general, *be'rith* is the regular designation for the friendly relation, growing out of Divine favor, which existed between God and certain favored men, or between God and the people of Israel. In certain portions of the Book of Daniel the whole Jewish religion in its essence is designated by this term. In the priestly codex the word is an artificial, theological term, indicating that arrangement which God has established as a guarantee of his gracious treatment of man. Consequently it has here the character of a promise on the part of God that cannot be recalled.

But in its less restricted sense the *be'rith* represented, on the one hand, the promises and agreements of God, and, on the other, certain duties prescribed to men. Consequently it was a token of the gracious and kindly presence of God, and of the voluntary and unconditional obedience that man must in turn offer. While at one time, one side, and again the other side, of this compact is especially accented, never are the mutual obligations conceived of as being similar in character, or the two parties as standing on a par. The *be'rith* was given by God. Man could only accept or reject.

The line of work which this article represents is most welcome to-day, since it is fundamental to a clear apprehension of the thought of the Old Testament writers. The facts and conclusions presented are doubly valuable, since the idea of the covenant plays such an important rôle in the development of the Hebrew religion. In the treatment of the historical usage of the term the article is most open to criticism. That

the religious conception of the covenant is one of the key-notes of the Deuteronomic school cannot for a moment be questioned. But that it originated with the writers of Jeremiah's time can hardly be accepted when we find, for example, in Hosea that the religious concept of the covenant relation, existing between Jehovah and his people, is one of the fundamental ideas that finds expression, not merely in one or two passages, that might be questioned, but directly or implicitly in almost every chapter of the book. Out of the depths of Hosea's personal experience the national-religious concept of the covenant relation appears to have arisen, while to the age of Jeremiah was left the task of adding the individual-religious concept which prepared the way for the denationalization of the covenant idea.

C. F. K.

ST. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY: XII. THE MORAL ENERGY OF FAITH. By PROFESSOR A. B. BRUCE, D.D., in *The Expositor* for December, 1893. Pp. 432-446.

It was necessary that Paul's doctrine of justification by faith be cleared of all suspicion with regard to its antinomian tendency. As Paul conceives it, faith is "a mighty principle, possessing a plurality of virtues and capable of doing more things than one." It avails for all purposes, for the obtainment of righteousness in every sense. It is good for all stages of the Christian life, good to make us holy as well as to obtain pardon.

The apostle's right to place such unbounded confidence in this doctrine of faith is expounded in Gal. 5 : 6, and 2 : 20 ; and in Rom. 6, the exposition is resumed and expanded. In the first passage, faith is exhibited as a powerful practical force with the highest motive of love, and effecting in the soul right conduct of the highest order. That faith is the might and strength of life is true not only of the Christians, but of all men. To believe in God is to make love the law of life. The boldness in expounding such a conception sprang out of his own experience—Paul's own faith was of this description.

But is faith alone a workable principle ? It is seen too often as mingled with legalism or, more incongruously, with vulgar morality. It has been found a hard thing to remain standing on the platform of free grace. But one must not judge the power of faith from the beginnings of Christian experience, but from its maturity. One must judge Paulinism by its author, not by its degenerate successors. Faith obviously may lose its power, then it becomes a tradition. But the obvious tendency of faith is to produce men who hope to rise to heights of moral attainment otherwise inaccessible. The other ground for reposing so confidently in the doctrine of faith is the believer's union with Christ. No man can, like the Apostle, think of himself as dying, rising, and ascending with Christ without being stirred to strenuous effort for moral heroism. The man who earnestly believes himself to be a son of God must needs try to be Godlike.

Accordingly, from all that precedes, it is apparent that Paul teaches that sanctifying power is inherent in faith ; "given faith, Christian sanctity is insured as its fruit or natural evolution." Faith then is the nexus between

justification and sanctification, between religion and morality. Some writers demur to giving such prominence to the moral energy of faith, and insist that justification and regeneration are two distinct divine acts. Baptism is supposed to be indispensable for the communication of the new life. But it is very unlikely that the Apostle should so minimize faith and magnify baptism. Even in Rom. 6, he employs baptism in a free poetic way as an aid to thought, just as elsewhere he employs the veil of Moses and the allegory of Sarah and Hagar.

These papers of Dr. Bruce are a very clear and impressive presentation of some of the essential principles of Paulinism. In his discussion of faith, he seems to put more emphasis on its energy and efficacy than was current even among the Reformers. Possibly the coloring in Dr. Bruce's conception of the moral energy of faith is somewhat too deep, as that of demurring theologians is too light. C. E. W.

HEBREW PROPHECY AND MODERN CRITICISM. By the REV. F. H. WOODS, in *The Expository Times* for March, 1894. Pp. 256-61.

Whatever may be said against "pure theology" as an unprogressive science, the charge is certainly not true of those auxiliary branches of study which throw light on the interpretation of the Bible. For this reason Christian Apologetics must take new ground to be in harmony with the spirit of the age. This spirit of the age demands above all things consistency and is coming to see that all truth is related truth. The recognition of this must have an effect upon theology and some have felt driven by it either to refuse to treat of theology rather than to treat it on this new principle, or as the alternative, to seek to reduce it to the level of all other branches of knowledge at the expense of reverence. But is there not another alternative? May we not do away with that isolation of religion which makes it unpractical and unreal so as to treat it by the same methods as other knowledge so that it shall be something that we can think as well as feel, yet at the same time regard it with as much of reverence as before.

The methods of the Christian apologist have changed, and whereas he formerly believed himself set to defend clearly cut and well defined truths against a definite set of hostile opinions and treated his opponent as a wilful malinger of the truth, he now investigates his own position if haply he may find some error there also, and treats those with whom he reasons as also seekers after the truth and co-workers with himself. In thus investigating his own position, he has come to give a different relative importance to some of the principal arguments.

Among the arguments that have undergone such a change is the special argument from prophecy, once one of the most important and convincing; for how could the prophecies, which were actually fulfilled in later Hebrew history and are successively being fulfilled even down to our time, have been

given otherwise than by special inspiration? But the spirit of the present age is in a great measure skeptical of the supernatural, and even Christian apologists, while rightly deeming it unscientific to reject the supernatural as impossible are disposed to rely but little on it in argument as savoring of special pleading and reasoning in a circle. While the apologist therefore still uses prophecy as an argument, he lays stress on its ethical rather than on its supernatural character.

The old method of studying the Bible was to assume certain facts about the Bible and then study it with these in view. One of these assumptions was that the whole of the Old Testament was pervaded by the New, and the effect of this was to exalt the Old. But the modern method neither affirms nor denies this, but starts out in its investigations free from assumptions; and when by a more accurate study of the Bible and of other branches of knowledge connected with it a number of discrepancies have been found, and when the study of geology, natural history, and anthropology throw more and more doubt upon the scientific accuracy of the Bible, and as a result of it all, many parts of it are found to be not up to the standard of absolute truth, the way is open for an unbiassed investigation into the method of its composition and the sources of its material, questions on which other ancient literatures and the monumental records throw considerable light. It then becomes possible to recast the history of Israel so as to obtain a natural and intelligible sequence.

If in this recasting, it appears that Deuteronomy was in substance a work of the time of Josiah and that the Levitical laws of the Mosaic system do not appear in operation till the time of Ezra, and the latter part of Isaiah is best explained on the assumption of an author living near the close of the exile, the critic in assigning these portions such late dates does not do so, because he denies the supernatural, *i. e.*, the possibility of Moses' predicting the establishment of the monarchy, etc., but because these dates best explain all the phenomena in the case. "The Christian, who believes not only in the possibility of the supernatural but in the actual existence of supernatural facts and powers among the Jews, may yet maintain, on perfectly logical grounds, the position of the advanced school of biblical criticism."

The method of study, which aims to look at an author's work from his own point of view, a method inaugurated by Erasmus but checked by the Puritan school, has now come to the front again. The result in Bible study is that we are no longer trying to read the New Testament back into the Old and to regard the Hebrew prophet as uttering for the church of the future, things that probably neither he nor his hearers could understand, but we are coming to see him as the spiritual and practical adviser of the men of his own time, speaking primarily to them and for them. Such a study of the prophet viewed in the historical setting of his own time then modifies our conception of prophecy in general, when it is seen (1) "that what were previously considered to be predictions of future events fulfilled

within the period of Jewish history were in all probability no predictions at all," and (2) "that what were believed to be simple predictions of a distant future have their most natural explanation in the historical events of their own time."

The article is a clear and interesting presentation of the position, which an increasing number of students are coming to take on the nature of the Old Testament prophecies, and shows how the new position may be taken without loss of reverence for the Scriptures or impairment of their usefulness for spiritual ends. It will not, however, satisfy those who are yet unprepared to admit the existence of literary fictions in the Bible.

D. A. W.